



Washington State Department of Agriculture

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Local farms, school districts team up for Taste Washington Day

OLYMPIA – As thousands of students settle into their school surroundings with new teachers, classes and catching up with old friends, there's one more issue for parents and students to consider for a good school year—nutritious meals to keep the mind and body prepared for learning.

On Sept. 26, over 300 schools and at least 30 local farms will participate in Taste Washington Day to celebrate the state's agricultural diversity and encourage healthy eating habits.

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) and the Washington School Nutrition Association (WSNA) are partnering with local schools to feature Washington-grown foods in their school meals.

"We encourage students and school representatives to try a variety of locally grown foods, support growth and appreciation for Washington agriculture and enjoy Taste Washington Day," said Tricia Kovacs, a WSDA outreach and education specialist. "Schools from Walla Walla to Bellingham are participating by partnering with farmers to serve the freshest foods during the current harvest."

"We know how important nutritious meals and snacks are for student's ability to concentrate and learn in school," said Raeann Ducar, RD, nutrition services supervisor for Freeman School District No. 358 in Rockford. "Taste Washington Day provides schools an opportunity to connect with local farmers," said Ducar, who also serves as marketing chair of the WSNA. "Every year we hear more feedback on the positive recognition Taste Washington Day brings to school food service programs from parents, students, media and the community."

Schools across Washington are serving up mouth-watering local fare from entrées of roasted chicken, homemade local beans and beef chili, potato leek soup, to sides of garden salads, carrots, cucumbers, apples, pluots, peaches, and locally produced milk. Many schools invite farmers, school administrators or elected officials for a delicious Washington-grown lunch. Students may work with foodservice to prepare and hand out samples to their peers, or take a field trip to a local farmers market to engage shoppers.

Farmers and school districts can contact Kovacs at (206) 256-6150 or tkovacs@agr.wa.gov to learn more about how to participate in Taste Washington Day (www.wafarmtoschool.org). Taste Washington Day also provides a great kick-off to National Farm to School Month in October, continuing the movement to encourage more locally purchased foods in schools.

Using limited federal grants, WSDA facilitates partnerships between local farmers selling to institutions, food banks, hospitals and to the public through community supported agriculture shares and farmers markets.

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